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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement^{*} submitted by the Amnesty International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 September 2015]

^{*} This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).



Civilians continue to be at risk of human rights abuses by Boko Haram and human rights violations by state security forces¹

Background

The conflict between the armed group Boko Haram and government security forces of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad has devastated the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Despite recent advances by Nigerian and regional armed forces, Boko Haram fighters continue to deliberately target civilians, while its leaders evade justice. At the same time, the response from government security forces, particularly in northern Cameroon and north-east Nigeria has been marred by serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Despite recent commitments by President Buhari, Nigeria has not yet taken adequate steps to thoroughly and independently investigate crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations by its forces. Similarly, serious incidents of human rights violations and possible crimes under international law have not been effectively investigated in Cameroon.

Amnesty International recalls the High Commissioner's oral statement at the last HRC Session that expressed concerns about human rights abuses by Boko Haram and violations by Nigerian and Cameroonian security forces.² The High Commissioner's reports contribute to truth, justice and reparations to victims in affected countries. These reports are also vital to ensuring that the affected States meet their obligations under international law and the mass atrocities committed in the region remain on the international community's agenda.

In light of the ongoing crimes under international law by the parties to the conflict and the absence of justice for victims and their families, Amnesty International urges the HRC to renew its request for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to continue regularly reporting to it on human rights abuses and violations committed in countries where Boko Haram operates.

Boko Haram's attacks against civilians in Nigeria

Amnesty International has documented evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Boko Haram, including murder, torture, rape, forced marriages and the recruitment of child soldiers.³ Despite recent advances by Nigerian and regional armed forces, attacks by Boko Haram continue to be a daily feature of life in north-east Nigeria. Boko Haram attacks may have claimed the lives of at least 1,100 civilians since the start of June 2015, bringing the death toll to at least 3,400 civilians in 2015 alone.⁴

Boko Haram fighters have continued to attack towns and villages without military presence. In the raids documented by Amnesty International, Boko Haram gunmen frequently rounded up residents, shot those who tried to escape and executed men and boys. Fighters stole any supplies they needed and set fire to people's homes, shops and markets.

¹ A longer version of this statement is available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/2428/2015/en/>

² "Oral Update on Boko Haram at the Human Rights Council 29th Session by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights" 1 July 2015

http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16177&LangID=E&_sm_a_u=iVVWF8DDiljFQQP#s.thash.Ws2jVvX.dpuf. [last accessed on 23 September 2015]

³ Amnesty International "'Our job is to shoot, slaughter and kill' Boko Haram's reign of terror in north-east Nigeria" 14 April 2014 (AFR 44/1360/2015) available from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/1360/2015/en/>. [last accessed on 23 September 2015]

⁴ These figures are based on Amnesty International's analysis of credible media sources and data collected by human rights defenders, think tanks and academic institutions. See also the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project available from <http://www.acleddata.com/data/realtime-data-2015/> [last accessed on 1 September 2015] and the Council on Foreign Relations "Nigeria Security Tracker" available from <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>. [last accessed on 1 September 2015]

One of the most lethal attacks in recent months occurred on 2 July when Boko Haram fighters killed more than 120 civilians in a raid on Kukawa town, Borno State.⁵ An eyewitness told Amnesty International how Boko Haram fighters ordered residents out of their homes and assembled approximately 58 people outside the village head's house.⁶ The gunmen told the people to lie down on the street and shot them. Others were shot in their homes or as they tried to flee. Boko Haram set fire to buildings before leaving.

Bomb attacks also continue to kill and cause injury to civilians across north-east Nigeria. They have routinely targeted locations with no military objective, including markets, transport hubs, bars, restaurants and places of worship. While Boko Haram has not claimed responsibility for all of these attacks, Amnesty International believes, based on analysis of the pattern of attacks as well as information gathered from witnesses and human rights defenders, that the bombings fit the group's methods and targets. Since the start of June 2015 Amnesty International has documented 14 bomb attacks in Nigeria, which killed at least 222 people.

According to eyewitnesses, Boko Haram used young women and girls as suicide bombers in many of the incidents. Such accounts corroborate testimony received by Amnesty International that Boko Haram has trained women and girls in the use of explosives.

Boko Haram's attacks against civilians in Cameroon

Amnesty International has also documented crimes under international law and human rights abuses by Boko Haram in northern Cameroon.⁷ Amnesty International documented raids by Boko Haram on the towns of Amchide on 15 October 2014 and Bia on 17 April 2015. In the attack on Amchide at least 30 civilians were killed, many as a result of deliberate targeting, as well as indiscriminate fire by Boko Haram fighters. Boko Haram also destroyed civilian property including a school, a church, a mosque and a health centre. When Boko Haram gunmen attacked Bia town, they deliberately targeted civilians, killing dozens, and methodically set fire to houses, destroying at least 150.

There have also been suicide bomb attacks in the Far North region of Cameroon. Suicide bomb attacks targeted the city of Maroua on 22 and 25 July 2015. At least 33 civilians were killed in these attacks. Dozens more have been killed in other suicide attacks in Fotoko and Kerawa.

Media reports suggest that at least 380 civilians may have been killed in Cameroon by Boko Haram since January 2014, including more than 150 since 1 June 2015.

Lack of accountability for violations committed by Nigerian security Forces

In the course of security operations against Boko Haram, Nigerian military forces have committed serious human rights violations, war crimes and acts which may constitute crimes against humanity. On 3 June 2015, Amnesty International released a report that documented shocking levels of deaths in military custody, extrajudicial executions, torture, unlawful detention and arbitrary arrests by the military.⁸ The report named current and former military officers who should be investigated for their potential individual and command responsibility for these crimes.

In response to the report, Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari, pledged to investigate these crimes, in accordance with Nigeria's obligations under national and international law, and to bring them to an end. However, Amnesty International is not aware of any action taken in the last three months to initiate these investigations. The conflict's thousands of victims, as well as their relatives, continue to wait for justice.

⁵ Amnesty International interviews with three eyewitnesses, July 2015.

⁶ Amnesty International interview with an eyewitness, July 2015.

⁷ Amnesty International "Human rights under fire: Attacks and violations in Cameroon's struggle with Boko Haram" 16 September 2015 (AFR 17/1991/2015) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/1991/2015/en/> [last accessed on 23 September 2015]

⁸ Amnesty International "Stars on their shoulders. Blood on their hands. War crimes committed by the Nigerian military" 3 June 2015 (AFR 44/1657/2015) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/1657/2015/en/> [last accessed on 23 September 2015]

Violations by Cameroonian security Forces

Amnesty International has documented crimes under international law and human rights violations committed by Cameroon's state security forces, including mass arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, excessive use of force, enforced disappearances, deaths in custody and inhumane and degrading treatment.⁹ These violations reached their peak between October 2014 and March 2015, corresponding to a peak in the intensity of Boko Haram attacks.

Since 2014, Cameroonian security forces have arrested over 1,000 people suspected of supporting Boko Haram. Most were arrested in mass "cordon-and-search" operations where security forces rounded up dozens, sometimes, hundreds of men. Amnesty International has documented mass arrests of suspected Boko Haram members in the city of Maroua, and in the villages of Magdeme, Doublé, and Guirvidig.

Amnesty International has documented poor detention conditions in Maroua Prison including chronic overcrowding, inadequate food, lack of drinking water, limited medical care, and deplorable hygiene and sanitation. As a result of these conditions, suspects have died in detention, with at least 40 dying between March and May 2015.

Recommendations

The work of the HRC is essential in supporting the efforts of affected States to meet their obligations under international law and ultimately to ensuring that the conflict's victims can learn the truth and access justice. In this regard, Amnesty International urges the HRC to:

- Ensure that the HRC be kept regularly informed of developments on the ground, including by requesting OHCHR written reports on the violations and abuses in countries where Boko Haram is operating to the HRC's thirty-first and thirty-third sessions;
- Ensure that HRC deliberations and requests for reports explicitly address human rights violations committed by state security forces and state-sponsored militia, as well as progress made in pursuing truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; and
- Urge the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon to urgently initiate thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into crimes under international law by all parties to the conflict.

⁹ Amnesty International "Human rights under fire: Attacks and violations in Cameroon's struggle with Boko Haram" 16 September 2015 (AFR 17/1991/2015) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/1991/2015/en/> [last accessed on 23 September 2015]